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COMPARATIVE HARAMBEE: HISTORY
AND THEORY OF VOLUNTARY
COLLECTIVE BEHAVIOUR

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores some case studies of Harambee activity in pre-Independence America (pre-1776) to illustrate some interesting parallels with Kenyan self-help. An attempt is then made to distill from the examples a socio-economic theory of the basis for voluntary provision of collective consumption goods, contrasting greatly with traditional theories of "free rider" motivation. Finally conclusions are drawn concerning the nature of Harambee in Kenya and possibilities for more rational channelling of Harambee energies. This paper was originally prepared for the East African Universities Social Science Council Conference, Dar es Salaam, December 1973.

INTRODUCTION

Although it is unclear from recent writings by social scientists whether self-help, at least in Kenya, is a boon or a bane, the importance of the Harambee phenomenon for rural development is unquestioned. The extent of Harambee, its prodigal vitality, prodigious problems, and vast potential (if properly harnessed) have been commented on in many sources.¹ Little attempt has been made, however, to examine evidence of similar self-help movements in other cultural and historical settings, to draw generalisations concerning the nature of voluntary collective behaviour and to apply these insights to the particular problems of self-help in Kenya. Such an undertaking is the purpose of this paper, tempered by two caveats: because it is a large undertaking we shall have to be content with a rather sketchy excursion into comparative self-help, and because we seek generalisations, the theory we shall examine will not explain all the varied details of Harambee.

It should be noted at the outset that we accept Harambee as a "non-optimal" use of resources. Theories of collective behaviour have convincingly demonstrated that public goods which are provided through voluntary efforts will not be supplied efficiently.² The appropriate question, given the existence of the Harambee spirit, is whether it can be utilised more efficiently. We shall return to this question later.

HISTORICAL CASE STUDIES

Kenya is justifiably renowned for its self-help activities. But self-help is surely not confined to Kenya. It is to be found currently in developing countries throughout the world, often masquerading under the label of community development projects.³ Furthermore, it is not uncommon in primitive societies. In this paper, we shall examine a more unexpected

1. See, for example, 2, 13, 14, 15.

2. "Efficiency" is defined as follows: the marginal rate of transformation of the collective consumption good into some numeraire private good must equal the sum of the corresponding marginal rate of substitution over all individuals. For a helpful explanation, see 24, chapter 7. By "public goods" here we do not refer solely to the "pure" case. The existence of exclusion problems is the vital characteristic for our purposes. If the good being provided falls into the category of a "club", where it can be jointly supplied to many individuals, but without net external benefits being generated, voluntary provision, with exclusion of non-contributors, can be efficient. See 11. Some Harambee projects, such as cattle dips, fall into this category. Traditional utility theory can be used to describe behaviour regarding such goods. In this paper we are more concerned with behaviour relating to "social" and "merit" wants, to use Musgrave's (1959) terms.

3. See 4 for numerous interesting case studies.

case - Harambee in pre-Independence America (i.e., pre-1776). A series of case studies is presented, chosen to illuminate interesting parallels between problems of Kenyan Harambee and problems of self-help in a very different environment. We shall begin with an examination of primary education, focussing on Boston and Philadelphia; this example provides insights into the relationship between government and voluntary effort. Secondly, we shall look at the founding of Harvard College and the provision of higher education in general to see the problems of finance which were faced and the uncontrolled blossoming of redundant institutions. Third, we examine the establishment of the Philadelphia Fire Department, which provides a case of public zeal swamping government plans. Finally, the evolution of the Philadelphia Hospital shows how innovations can be translated into Harambee activity and how government can aid in the process. Many more cases could be described, but for the limitations of space.

Before proceeding, a brief description of the pre-Independence political and social climate in Boston and Philadelphia is in order. Both Boston (about 1630) and Philadelphia (about 1690) were founded by religious groups, and both therefore began as very cohesive, homogeneous communities. Because of immigration, war and the fact that they were seaports, both towns by the early years of the 18th century had outgrown their early parochial character and had become religiously, socially and economically heterogeneous communities. The political differences between the two towns are more important for our purposes. In Boston, there was quickly established a democratic local government (and Colonial government as well) with relatively extensive franchise. The government had the power to tax and was structured in such a way that the citizenry had an effective political outlet for satisfaction of pressing social needs. In contrast, Philadelphia colonists were faced with a medieval corporate form of municipal government, with greatly circumscribed powers of taxation and a very narrow, aristocratic franchise. Effectively then, the citizens of Philadelphia had little or no political recourse for the satisfaction of their needs. Given this background let us proceed to a discussion of American Harambee.

Case 1.⁴ In both Boston and Philadelphia, strong European traditions favouring education were brought to the New World by the settlers. Although based on religious beliefs in both towns, the value placed on education was translated into action in very different ways, the difference being dictated by the political environments outlined above.

4. For details, see 7, 8 and 16.

In Boston, the first "free school" was established in 1642 by voluntary subscription of 45 wealthy citizens. The town government granted land to provide income and the following year took over full responsibility. More schools were set up by the town government in 1684 and 1686, and education became the major item in the town's budget. Four more elementary and secondary schools were established by 1720. All were inspected and provided for by the town, with good physical facilities and good salaries for the masters.⁵ Fees were charged but were waived for the poor. This rapidly expanding network of public schools meant that the competing private schools atrophied, leaving the town with an excellent education system financed by taxation.

In Philadelphia, an equally fine supply of educational facilities, both in quantity and quality, was established with essentially no government participation. The impetus here was from the Quakers (Society of Friends), who highly valued elementary education. The first school, open to the whole community, was begun in 1689 with the hiring of a Master. He was allowed to charge tuition on the condition that the poor were tutored free of charge. Over the next few decades the school expanded, facilities were built, and scholarships were offered to the poor who would otherwise have had to work. In 1701 the school received a charter from the founder of the Colony, but still received no government support at all. Concurrently a large number and variety of schools for men and women, providing vocational and academic training, were established by other sectarian groups, all thriving on voluntary subscriptions, gifts and legacies. Primary education here, without any tax aid or official regulation, was among the best and most liberal (practical) in the colonies (in the opinion of education historians).

While many of these schools were open to the general public, they were controlled by church groups. In 1741, the first non-sectarian school was opened, financed by philanthropic contributions. Then in 1749, following publicity in the press, subscriptions were taken for a major non-sectarian school. The donors and the board represented a cross section of many faiths, and the school was widely supported, especially by the wealthier citizens,

5. Not all Massachusetts schools were as well endowed. One New England town in 1725 voted at a town meeting that a teacher be hired. A motion to provide the teacher with the same salary as the minister failed, as did successive motions for a salary of £40, £30, £20 and £5. Finally £3 was voted. It is unlikely that they got a first class teacher. See 16, chapter IX.

even those with no direct self interest (i.e., children). The municipal government limited its involvement to a contribution (totalling less than 10% of the pledge) and a resolution congratulating the public spirit of the benefactors. This school, called the Philadelphia Academy, quickly grew to include a large charity school and a fine secondary school which in 1793 added the College of Philadelphia (at the time the only non-sectarian college in the Colonies, now the University of Pennsylvania). Finance (excluding the government's initial gift) was entirely through voluntary collection in the Colony and in England, plus lotteries.

Looking beyond these two special cases, there was little trace of government support for education in the Colonies. Even after Independence, over 70 years were required before government control and finance began to take seed. In spite of the urging of America's greatest leaders, such as Washington, Adams ("Education is so extremely wise and useful that ... no expense for this purpose would be though extravagant.") and Jefferson, the public's aversion to taxation and the tradition of charity (which relieved pressures for government action) delayed the evolution of public education. Where such government support was lacking, schools were characterised by short terms, poor equipment, and inadequately trained teachers, although education did in fact reach much of the population in many states.

Case 2.⁶ On October 26, 1636, the Great and General Court of the Governor and Company of the Massachusetts Bay in New England passed a resolution founding a college at Newtowne (now Cambridge) for the training of ministers. A gift of £400 from the General Court (half of the colony's budget for that year) was voted (in fact not fully paid until 1649). Aside from the initial gift and the rights to ferry fees of about £35 per year after 1641, Harvard College, opened in 1637, had to struggle for funds to see the light of day. The name Harvard was taken from an early benefactor who died in 1639 and left an estate of £780 in the form of debts receivable and lands in England. In fact by 1640 much of the early funding had been somehow squandered by the first master; and the school was by no means on its feet. Occasional gifts came in from rich colonists and from England, but no income generating properties were forthcoming. Furthermore much of what was given was not terribly liquid. The Court's gift was paid from rates (taxes) collected from the farmers in the form of low grade corn and wheat. Also, since the College had no treasury, legacies and gifts

6. For details, see 18 and 12.

from other sources were deposited with the Court. Due to a general cash shortage in the Colony, the Court would spend the money deposited; when withdrawal from account was demanded by the College, the Court would meet its obligation out of tax revenues. So the College would once again receive grain, with interest.

In 1641, a mission to England raised only £300 in books and gifts. In desperation the new and honest master turned to an informal confederation of New England Colonies and asked for aid. The Colonies passed non-binding resolutions advertising the plight of the College which resulted in a phenomenal amount of voluntary contribution; small farmers all over New England each donated one peck of wheat to maintain the College. Enough wheat was given in that year and for the next seven years to support fully the teaching staff of the College and ten to twelve scholarship students.⁷ By 1647 the gifts began to wane as it became apparent that most of the graduates were going abroad; but the College had survived its initial crisis. Later gifts, mostly from rich merchants who "could afford the luxury of philanthropy" (12, p.12), were sufficient to maintain the College, and donations of land gave the College a steady flow of income.

Looking more generally at the birth of higher education in America, state support was largely absent before Independence.⁸ Most schools struggled for funds, using a variety of devices, including lotteries (which most of the theocratic communities considered to be immoral), subscription lists, legacies, gifts, honorary degrees, tuition and lists of patrons. Most successful though were organised fund raising campaigns, both at home and abroad. Also very lucrative was competition among towns for the honour of having a college. Brown and Rutgers Universities found homes in this way.

As wealth grew, many individuals took up the practice of establishing their own colleges. By the time of the Civil War (1861) there were 173 permanent colleges competing for funds. On balance this resulted in low quality for most

7. The town of Salem passed a resolution wherein the voters "Ordered and Agreed that all such as God Stirres up in their hearts to contribute to the College at Cambridge..." should bring gifts. Nothing at all was given, and this was the only town in New England which failed altogether to contribute. Significantly, Salem had been Cambridge's sole rival for the location of the college.

8. Only William and Mary College in Virginia was state supported. In trying to raise money for the venture in England, an agent of the Virginia Assembly approached the Custodian of the Crown Purse and was rebuffed by a curt "Damn your souls! Raise Tobacco!" See 16, chapter IV.

of the schools since resources were spread too thin to maintain adequate standards. Yet this was acceptable given the robust growth and prevailing philosophy of the time: "If a college attracts to itself patronage and endowment, it has a right to live; if it does not, it will die".⁹

Case 3.¹⁰ As in all urban areas, fire control was vital to the progress of nascent Philadelphia. In 1696 the municipal government required all households to supply themselves with a ladder and buckets. Municipal authorities were provided with extra equipment and authority to blow up houses to prevent the spread of fire (a popular method of control). Recompense for houses blown up came from the town. In addition town inspectors checked chimneys (a major source of fires) and the Corporation (government) used fines for more equipment. In 1718 the first fire engine was purchased by the Corporation. Thus first steps toward fire control were taken at the initiative of the government.

The first sign of Harambee fire control came in 1730 when the Corporation decided more equipment was needed on a large scale. Rather than levy a tax, the Corporation raised funds through a public subscription. Later that year following a major fire, the government determined that three more engines were needed and this time resorted to taxation. But "to ease the inhabitants" another subscription was used to reduce the burden. The town now had four engines, housed and maintained at public expense. Soon thereafter, government involvement began to atrophy in the face of large-scale self-help efforts.

One of Philadelphia's civic leaders (unconnected with government or with the church, to be sure) was Benjamin Franklin. In 1736 he suggested in the press that local fire control was inadequate, relying as it did on ad hoc groups of citizens to man the public equipment. As a remedy, Franklin proposed a meeting to set up a volunteer fire department. Initially 30 men formed a company, meeting monthly and purchasing equipment through contributions and fines for absenteeism. Soon other groups were forming companies, combining civic responsibility with socialising on a regular basis. Starting in 1739, these volunteer companies began to purchase their own engines and controlled activity in the city to the extent that in 1749 the city-owned facilities came under their inspection. By 1752 the volunteer companies broadened their scope to include extension of credit to fire victims. Before the Revolutionary War, over 500 men belonged to volunteer companies, and these became the focus for

9. From a 1877 pamphlet on higher education; cited in 23.

10. For details see 7, 8 and 9.

philanthropic and political activity in the city.¹¹ Through self-help efforts, Philadelphia became the safest city in the world with regard to fires, in spite of the fact that the government did essentially nothing to aid the movement during the last 40 years of Colonial rule. Successful self-help induced apathy on the part of the authorities.

Case 4.¹² Prior to 1748 hospital facilities throughout the Colonies were limited to "pest houses" for quarantine of obviously contagious diseases. The need for public health facilities was simply not recognised, making hospital provision an unlikely target for self-help activity. In Philadelphia, the Colonial Assembly had built a pest house in 1732, and in the same year an Alms House was built largely by public subscription and a loan from the Assembly which provided some medical services for the poor.

In 1748 a Philadelphia physician, Dr. Thomas Bond, returned from England having viewed some European hospitals. He felt that a hospital which would offer intensive care facilities to the community at large would be of great service to Philadelphia, and so he enlisted Benjamin Franklin's aid in organising the project. Franklin at first promoted a public subscription after some initial publicity in his newspaper of the need for, and benefits of, a hospital but because the idea was foreign to the citizens the subscription was a total failure. After this setback, Franklin took the idea to the Colonial Assembly. He proposed a public hospital to be open to citizen and stranger alike, but the Assembly, controlled by rural interests, was not keen to grant money which would largely benefit the city. So Franklin changed course and finally got the Assembly to grant £2000 capital, the interest to be used for operating expenses, if Franklin could raise the same amount for construction of the facility. Apparently the Assembly, noting the poor response to the initial subscription, did not expect to be called upon to make good its promise. However Franklin, armed with this promise and benefitting from a few intervening years of publicity during which the idea had spread, easily raised the necessary sum by public subscription in 1751. In fact he raised £4,750. The hospital opened in 1752 and continued to receive active public support, so that in 1754 the Directors could report that "few of the Wealthy, or those of the middling Rank, failed of contributing according to their circumstances". The hospital was open to all on either a paying or charity basis except for those with

11. It is interesting to note that New York City (which the British took from the Dutch in 1664) had no fire fighting equipment until 1730, and very little until 1737 when some municipal buildings were destroyed. The Corporation quickly levied a tax to buy two new engines and 100 buckets.

12. See 9 for details.

incurable or infectious diseases; in fact patients came from as far away as Virginia. An historian of the period has concluded that Philadelphia, through self-help supported (if unintentionally) by the government, achieved an array of medical services seldom equalled anywhere relative to the size of the community.

A THEORY OF HARAMBEE

The above cases clearly refer to situations quite different from those found in Kenya today. In the first place, they all refer to urban areas in contrast to the rural nature of Kenya's Harambee movement. Secondly, the Colonial seaport towns were quite wealthy compared to Kenya's rural areas. As we have seen, wealthy merchants and gentry were vital to the success of the self-help efforts in America. Yet these important differences should not deter us from abstracting some basic insights about the nature of voluntary provision of collective goods and applying these insights to Kenya.

A basic lesson to be learned from our study is that the standard theory of public goods interaction cannot help us to understand self-help behaviour. Glancing at some of the conclusions of the public goods literature, we can see how irrelevant these analyses are to the problem at hand. Musgrave, referring to social wants, has concluded. "...everyone knows that his benefit will be independent of his particular contribution. Hence... he cannot be relied upon to make a voluntary contribution." (20, p.10) Elsewhere, Musgrave has commented that the truth of this proposition is evident given the "very fact that such enforcement [of taxation] appears to be universally necessary". (19, p.220) Regarding less-than-pure public goods (merit wants), Samuelson has concluded that "it is in the selfish interest of each person to give false signals, to pretend to have less interest in a given collective consumption activity than he really has" (22, p.338), leading to what is necessarily a sub-optimal supply of any such good. In such analyses, one cannot find explanations for the excess provision of Harambee schools in Kenya or colleges in the US.

In order to develop a theory of Harambee then, we have to turn to a more appropriate analysis of the nature of social interaction which can lead an individual to contribute to a Harambee project in blatant disregard of free rider rationality.¹³ To understand how voluntary provision of collective

13. The free rider theory has been the basis of the theory of public goods provision since 1939. It fundamentally denies that rational individuals will voluntarily support a collective consumption good (or service) when exclusion from use of the good as a penalty for failure to contribute to the cost of the project is technically impossible (as with national defense), impracticable (as with a city street), or simply unutilised (as with a toll-free bridge). In this circumstance (called "nonexcludability") one's benefit is largely independent of one's contribution, assuming a large enough community so that an individual's contribution would be small relative to the whole. Thus each individual has a choice of donating or not donating with approximately the same economic benefits (ignoring variables of social influence just now) in either case. "Rationality" then dictates that one not contribute.

consumption goods can be possible, normal models of individual decision calculus must be modified by three additions from social psychology: first, that interaction within any community is characterised by the establishment of leadership roles with their own rewards and obligations; second, that preferences (norms, opinions, tastes) can be influenced by reference group identifications; and third, that individuals receive real gratifications from social relationships.¹⁴

Let us assume that a felt-need for a collective consumption good exists within a community and that the government is either unwilling or unable to satisfy this need. Other things being equal, no individual will be willing to undertake the effort of organising self-help since he would prefer to let others do it and consume the benefits at no cost. However, other things are not equal. Some individuals are community leaders by consensus. Leaders are expected to lead, and they get gratification from doing so. Therefore failure to lead will weaken one's influence, imposing real costs to the individual in question. The strength of this effect will depend on the salience and intensity of the felt-need, so that leaders may be induced to accept organising roles for satisfying the need. Of course a leader can also introduce a project idea unrelated to a felt-need. Part of the leadership role in any group is to serve as a bearer of new ideas.

Still organising a group to promote a self-help scheme is not the same as actually accomplishing the scheme. We must somehow overcome the free rider rationality which dictates that each individual should let others bear the cost of contributing so as to have the good made available at minimum cost to himself. This task can be accomplished by the community leaders. People who usually fulfill leadership roles are characteristically high status members of the community. This provides them with two channels for influencing the decision calculus of the rest of the community in favour of active participation in self-help activities.

First, as mentioned above, high status individuals are generally opinion leaders (foci of reference identification) in the sense that others in the community tend to look toward high status people when forming attitudes and adopting norms. To the extent that individuals receive gratification from conforming to ideas of community leaders qua leaders, they can be induced to incur some cost (make some contribution) in the interests of conformity. Especially in Kenya with its strong leadership bonds, this aspect of social interaction must be recognised.

14. For a detailed presentation of the behavioural model discussed here, see 5 and 6.

Second, the leaders will be members of primary (face-to-face) groups. Such groups form the basis of man's social existence, and the gratifications derived from direct contact with other human beings require no comment. These gratifications, however, depend on face-to-face contacts being harmonious (consonant). Where dissonance is perceived, significant costs are imposed. These costs are usually not symetric. They depend on leader-follower roles established within each small group. Significant for our purposes is the tendency of high-status individuals in the community-at-large to be leaders within primary groups of which they are members. Thus they can impose real costs on other members of the group and can influence behaviour through the introduction of norms and attitudes. Through what has been called by social psychologists the "strain toward symmetry", non-leaders within a primary group will be willing to incur conformity costs to avoid disharmony.

The ability of a leader to influence action, to affect the decision calculus of others, will depend on his status and also on the amount of communication he establishes concerning the particular norm. Also, since other individuals have other group connections within which they wish to maintain consonance, the effectiveness of leadership will often depend on the nature of the norm which is being communicated - its conformity to values anchored in other group memberships. Leadership is therefore circumscribed; we find that the influence relationship between leaders and followers is not a one-way channel, both in defining leadership roles and in determining the response to leadership communications.

Data generated during the Long Vacation Internship Programme of the Department of Economics, University of Nairobi, has indicated that the role of leadership in Harambee activities in Kenya is consistent with the theory outlined above.¹⁵ In Table 1, we show the percentage of respondents in different categories who reported that they had "willingly contributed"¹⁶ to Harambee

15. Participants in this programme were University students who had just completed their second or third year of study. The goal was to provide experience in the practical tasks of economics by allowing the students to define and pursue their own projects. Given this goal, supervision was purposely loose, leading to some data problems. In the project referred to here three locations in Kenya's Central Province- Muhoya, Nyeri District, Komothai, Kiambu District, and Chogoria, Meru District-- were studied to see if willingness to contribute to Harambee projects correlated with various economic and social variables. It should be noted that the results (136 respondents) are probably biased slightly toward high willingness to give due to a bias in sampling procedure: the students chose to begin their sample at a Harambee project site and work outward. Thus people living near the project are over-represented. The data is presented here with the permission of Messrs.Clifford Gitari, Peter N. Gitau, and Peter G. Karuthiru, who ran the project.

16. A negative reply could be either an unwilling contribution or no contribution at all. The data unfortunately does not distinguish between these alternatives. Still it does provide a useful test of the extent of voluntary contributions.

secondary schools or health centres. "Willing" was defined according to the respondents' own perceptions, which were felt to provide the best definition. Question A responses show that those who had contributed at a fund raising rally were far more likely to give willingly than those who had not attended such a rally. Very similar results are found where a contribution was made at a rally chaired by a national leader (question B). Even more striking, question C shows that of those who personally knew a local leader speaking at a rally, over 90% had willingly contributed to projects, as opposed to only 50% of those who did not know a leader. In all three cases, the difference in the means is fully significant statistically. This implies that social pressures-- both through primary group relations and reference identification-- were quite important determinants of people's willingness to give.¹⁷

Given that influence will depend on the leaders' status and communications and on the nearness of the communicated norms to socially anchored values, an individual's willingness to contribute should also be affected by benefits which the project in question will yield--either direct benefits to himself or indirect benefits to others with whom he identifies strongly (e.g. family).¹⁸ As the free rider theory suggests, an individual's contribution will have a negligible impact on the benefits to be made available; therefore we cannot expect him to contribute as quid pro quo for benefits to be received. However, his willingness to respond to social pressure will be influenced by the perceived benefits of the project.

This same factor will influence the willingness of the leaders to respond to felt-needs. Given a degree of socially induced incentive to take action, a leader's willingness to accept a responsible role will be affected by the benefits (aside from those connected with leadership per se) to himself of having the project made available. Thus there is an implicit bias in self-help activity favouring projects with higher returns for the leadership group, other things being equal.

The perceived benefits from having a project completed will be related to the probability of success of the project. Contributing to a project which is unlikely to succeed is a losing proposition. The perceived likelihood of success will itself depend on the leadership, the nature of the project (correspondence to felt-needs or cultural values) and the nature of the organisation.

17. Of course this is not proof, since the direction of causation underlying the correlation is not unambiguous. It is possible that those who were willing to give were the ones who chose to attend the rally.

18. We can also include here any possible direct utility benefits from the act of giving in and of itself.

Table 1.

Question	Contribution referring to HS or HC ^a	Response to Question	Respondent contributed willingly (%)	No. Resp. in Category	Standard deviation of mean	Difference of means significant at x (%) level
A. Did you contribute at a fund raising rally?	HS	Yes	85%	120	.03	99%
		No	50%	16	.12	
	HC	Yes	80%	121	.04	99%
		No	33%	15	.17	
B. Did you contribute at rally chaired by national leader?	HS	Yes	86%	124	.03	99%
		No	25%	12	.12	
	HC	Yes	79%	124	.03	99%
		No	25%	12	.12	
C. Did local leader speaking at rally know you personally?	HS	Yes	95%	90	.02	99%
		No	52%	46	.07	
	HC	Yes	90%	84	.03	99%
		No	51%	52	.06	
D. Do you have children in primary school?	HS	Yes	97%	94	.02	99%
		No	42%	42	.08	
E. Hospital near home before contributing?	HC	Yes	69%	69	.06	93%
		No	82%	67	.05	
F. Do wealthy give more than poor?	HS	Yes	83%	90	.04	less than 90%
		No	76%	46	.06	
	HC	Yes	83%	90	.04	99%
		No	61%	46	.07	
G. Overall	HS		81%	136	.03	N.R. ^b
	HC		76%	136	.04	N.R.

^a HS = Harambee Secondary School.
 HC = Harambee Health Centre.

^b N.R. = Not Relevant.

Source: Long Vacation Internship Programme, Dept. of Economics,
 University of Nairobi. Questionnaire Results.

People should be more willing to give through a cooperative, where everyone else gives as well, than on an individual basis. Similarly a fund raising drive using pledges, to be honoured only on attainment of a goal, will tend to be more successful than individual requests. Again people may well be willing to submit to taxation to provide for a collective consumption need, where they would be unwilling to contribute voluntarily, and in locales where everyone traditionally pitches in one is more willing to do so himself (in addition to having higher dissonance costs from failing to contribute). Thus the more cohesive a community, the greater the chances of successful self-help activities.

Finally, we might expect that voluntary contributions to the provision of a collective consumption good will bear a relation to the income of the donor. To the extent that the social pressures which are generated involve some notion of fair share, they will tend to induce larger contributions from wealthier members of a community. Even aside from this effect, a wealthier individual might be willing to offer a larger contribution in response to any given social pressure, assuming declining marginal utility of income. Any given psychic utility loss from failure to give should correspond to a larger absolute money value for the rich than for the poor. It must be stressed that we have been analysing only broad tendencies suggested by rudimentary social psychology and economics; exceptions to our arguments would certainly be expected.

Given this theory of Harambee demonstrating how voluntary provision of collective goods can be a rational response to a set of economic and social circumstances, let us try to apply our understanding to a discussion of Kenyan Harambee. In the next section we shall try to explain some aspects of Harambee which have been raised in other discussions of the subject (being necessarily very selective in scope). Then we turn to the problem of controlling Harambee for more rational rural development.

THE NATURE OF HARAMBEE IN KENYA

We have tried to explain the nature of voluntary provision of collective goods, but in fact the opinion is often heard that Harambee schemes in Kenya simply are not voluntary. It is easy to find someone who knows of confiscated property or withheld school-fee receipts pending a contribution to self-help projects. In such cases the observations above would be inappropriate. The relevant analysis would examine not influence relationships, but power relationships within the community-- not the ability of one individual (or group) to affect the behaviour of another, but the ability of the one to require behaviour from the

other. While the definition of voluntary action is notoriously difficult, we shall accept behaviour as voluntary if it is done willingly, even if it is a response to social pressure (translate as search for social gratification). Any behaviour perceived by the individual as unwillingly performed is certainly not voluntary; similarly activity undertaken upon threat of objective penalty. In contrast social costs are subjective, depending on the receptivity of the individual and the cohesiveness of his group identification, i.e. on internal perceptions, not external sanctions. To disallow social pressure would be to define most every decision as coerced, certainly defying normal usage of the word voluntary.

So is Kenya's Harambee movement truly voluntary in this sense? Or do successful projects depend on coerced contributions and thus on a totally different set of conditions than those we have examined? Despite frequent comment to the contrary, I would doubt that the movement is largely supported by coercion. Prima facie evidence for this point of view is the mere fact that there appears to be a very real spirit of Harambee in Kenya. While the outsized Institutes of Technology seem to involve more formally required contributions, the continued vitality of local Harambee (and even the obvious difficulties of controlling it) indicates that it is still substantially a popular voluntary movement.

During the early stages of the Internship Programme at the University of Nairobi, a seminar discussion on Harambee was held at which the view prevailed that these projects were not based on voluntary action; the students suggested that few people actually gave willingly, that coercion, property confiscation, etc. was the norm. With this expectation, the students doing the survey on Harambee projects were very much surprised to find that the great majority of respondents (over 75%) said that they had willingly given to various projects and property confiscation turned out to be insignificant.¹⁹ Furthermore, many people spoke with pride of the projects in their area and refused to admit that any project had failed, even when no progress had been made for a considerable period of time. This would certainly not be true if contributions had been squeezed out

19. As noted (fn. 16) "unwilling" could be giving without wanting to or not giving at all. Confiscation was not tested empirically, so the comment in the text refers to qualitative impressions from the field work. It must be noted that questionnaire responses, as usual, do not necessarily provide "true" tests. Furthermore, data can be subject to various interpretations, in this case either "Aha! 75% gave willingly," or "Aha! 25% did not give willingly." Since our expectation (in effect our null hypothesis) was that voluntarism was not extensive, the former interpretation seems to deserve the exclamation. Similarly, ambiguity attaches to the data presented below regarding benefits and willingness to give.

of the people. While the locations covered are not representative of all of Kenya,²⁰ the implication is clear-- reports of coercion are probably much exaggerated, at least insofar as local Harambee projects are concerned.

Accepting that basically voluntary effort is involved, let us examine three aspects of Harambee using the history and theory as guidelines: first, the origins of Harambee in Kenya; second, the nature of the interaction between leaders and the community; and finally the significance of contributions qua taxes.

To begin, I would like to question the frequently heard assertion that Harambee in Kenya has its roots in tribal community spirit. As John Anderson (2, p. 106) has put it: "The origins of self-help activities in Kenya can be traced back to the age-grade structures and patterns of communal government and responsibility which featured in so many of her traditional societies." But given the fact that self-help school movements are found in many diverse cultures, including the American Colonies (and even the Kenyan Indian community in the early 20th century), it is probably more appropriate to suggest that the origins of Kenya's self-help lie in normal sociological reactions to felt-needs. It is simply rational human behaviour among social (as opposed to economic) men which is at the root of Harambee. What is special about Kenya's tribal tradition, then, is not self-help, but the spirit of cohesiveness which characterises tribal identifications, producing a very strong set of social pressures in favour of contributions to collective activity.

A second point I should like to make refers to the preoccupation with the politics of Harambee in recent papers on the subject. The prevailing opinion is nicely captured in a remark made by the Minister of Labour, quoted in Keller (15, p.14): "...though I am not very happy with what they are doing, I am building these schools.... This is political and cannot be helped." Most commentators see the motivation for involvement of politicians as "personal political ambitions", or attempts to "help maintain and perhaps even broaden their own political bases". Anderson (3, p.162) suggests that the paradox of government leaders encouraging Harambee which contradicts official government policy is due to a sophisticated political scheme to control local energies while weakening local leadership which threatens the central administration. Godfrey and Mutiso (13, p. 18) even hint that the role of "non-politicians" (their own term) involved in Institutes of Technology "may become clearer when the candidates for the 1974 elections declare themselves".

20. A fourth location in Western Kenya was also covered by the project, but the replies had to be disregarded due to irregularities in the data collection.

In contrast, our historical case studies certainly suggest the possibility that non-political motivations can be important aspects of leadership. Our theory of sociological motivations would also predict just about the same behaviour on the part of leaders (e.g., organisation of high-status committees; public expressions of support combined with private misgivings) which we in fact observe in Kenya. In addition, according to the Internship Programme research results, project initiation was largely in the hands of non-politicians in the surveyed areas.²¹ Politics might tell the whole story about Harambee leadership if political gains were the only rewards from leadership, but as we have seen, leadership offers its own gratifications, and sociological gratifications (fulfilling one's role as community leader) are probably far more salient in most cases than political gains which might depend on the hope that the community's political memory will last until the next (often undated) election.

While not meaning to deny that such leadership provides a springboard for later political gains, nor that politics is a significant aspect of leadership behaviour, I believe that the emphasis on political motivation has been overplayed. Politics has its role, but Harambee is just as much an economic and social phenomenon. Thus where Godfrey and Mutiso (13, p.4) state that a Harambee secondary school is an ideal project, "combining a large expected private payoff for its contributors... with a handsome political payoff for its main sponsors", I would suggest that the social payoffs are probably of more direct importance than the political payoffs.²²

Another common observation regarding Harambee activities is that the rural populace is being taken for a ride by the elite who benefit the most from the projects which are established. Regarding the Institutes of Technology Godfrey and Mutiso suggest that Harambee is degenerating into regressive taxation, transferring resources from the poor to the wealthy,²³ and Anderson (2) claims that the finance of Harambee secondary schools exacerbates inequalities within

21. Politicians (38% of responses) finish a poor third to administrators (85%) and "other local leaders" (54%) in answer to the question "Who initiates projects in your area?".

22. Contrast the Godfrey/Mutiso position with Mbithi (17, p.158) who states that the social sphere is the sole determinant of social interaction.

23. This fact may be true regarding the Institutes. It should be noted that transfers from the poor to those who can mobilise resources has been a standard basis of economic development in all of the developed world, though it certainly is not in the spirit of African Socialism.

the community since only the relatively rich will be able to afford fees. Where contributions are based on coercion (which Godfrey and Mutiso link to financing of the Institutes) a result of this sort would be expected, but with voluntary finance it might be asked whether this is very likely.

From our theory we see that the response to self-help activity will depend on both the strength of pressures to conform (which themselves depend significantly on the benefits to the community) and the benefits accruing to the individual from the project. We should expect, then, that contributions would conform broadly to benefits, but with enough latitude to favour the elite who are responsible for organising the effort and the communications which stimulate the social processes. It is unlikely, though, that sufficient community spirit would be generated to finance projects which actually were of no benefit to the poor majority. As Oyugi points out (21, p. 12), "It is generally accepted that popular participation depends upon the amount of direct benefit that the individual or family can hope to derive from the particular development project."

We are not now asking about the optimality of the project selection and implementation, but rather about principles of finance. To the extent that people give because they value the good to be provided, Harambee contributions can be considered as a broadly conceived benefit tax, which has as much claim to ethical justification as any other basis for taxation. Also, to the extent that people give as a response to positive reference identifications, there will be no disutility associated with the contribution. Finally, where a contribution is a response to a direct social pressure, it may still be superior to taxation since it allows the individual to determine his own response as defined by his internal perceptions of the pressures. Of course where Harambee contributions are coerced, there is no correlation with benefit. While the underlying distribution of income may be lamented, we should recognise that Harambee finance might distribute the cost burden in a broadly defensible manner, insofar as contributions are indeed voluntary.

However, do contributions actually relate to benefits? The first step toward answering this question is to recognise that benefits to the individuals involved are not confined to consumption of the service per se. An individual can also benefit (in a very real sense) from community pride,

or the knowledge that he himself helped to get something done.²⁴ A poor man who contributes a small amount to a Harambee school, even though his children will be unable to attend, might still feel his contribution was warranted.²⁵

Looking specifically at Harambee secondary schools, evidence compiled by Brownstein (10) brings into question Anderson's contention about the distribution of benefits. In a follow-up study of students who wrote the Kenya Preliminary Examination (given after seven years of primary school) during the years 1965-67, Brownstein found that those who went on to Harambee schools were very similar to the community at large in most key family characteristics. He concludes:

The fact that there is no significant difference between the Harambee school group and those not in secondary school may reflect the fact that Harambee schools, which have been built by the community, more nearly reflect the community in composition than do other secondary schools. (10, pp. 59-60)

He correctly points out that his evidence is inconclusive,²⁶ but it suggests the possibility that contributions and benefits do not affect distribution as adversely as is often supposed.

Additional indicative evidence of a relationship between benefits and contributions appears in Table 1. Question D shows that of those who had children of primary school age, 97% willingly contributed to Harambee secondary schools, as opposed to only 42% of those without primary school children. The very significant difference between these means demonstrates a strong relationship between potential benefit and attitudes toward participation in the self-help effort. Again, referring to health centre projects (question F) we find a significant difference in terms of willingness to contribute between those who did and those who did not have a hospital near their homes before contributing.²⁷

24. Batten (4, chapter 2) describes a case in which a social development officer was approached by the people of a poor community who wanted to build a library. When it was finished, no one wanted to use it. Its only benefit (and apparently the reason it was wanted in the first place) was as a source of pride for the community. Batten's case studies also strongly support the idea that leaders cannot successfully push through a self-help project for which people perceive no particular benefit.

25. The extreme form of the argument would be: "Who is to say that Egypt's pyramids were a waste of scarce resources?"

26. In fact it contradicts less precise evidence given by Anderson (2, p.171) who finds that families of Harambee school students tend to be disproportionately representative of the wealthy families of the community.

27. Here the term "near" was left to be defined by the individual's perception. It appears curious that 69% of those who already had a hospital near home gave a willing contribution anyway. Asked for an explanation, virtually all respondents answered that they expected the Harambee health centre to be nearer home and to offer better services; 86% expected it to be cheaper; and 64% said they gave because everyone else was doing so.

This finding also tends to suggest that contributions are influenced by benefits. Finally, though not directly related to benefits, it is interesting to note that 94% of the respondents stated that the wealthy were in general expected to give more than the poor. Though a lower proportion (66%) believed that the wealthy actually did give more, we find (question F) that willingness to contribute is closely related to this belief. People who believed that the wealthy made larger contributions were more prepared to contribute than were those who denied the proposition. This finding is consistent with the comment of the managers of the Philadelphia Hospital that citizens had given "according to their circumstances".

Generally then, we find many Harambee projects will tend to raise money in a way which, while certainly not progressive, is at least related broadly to benefits and possibly to ability-to-pay as well. While we have proven nothing we do find reason to doubt the usual rhetoric about Harambee financing.

In this section we have tried to utilise our theory, a few historical cases and a modicum of empirical findings about Harambee to gain insight into the nature of self-help activity in Kenya. In doing so we have found that a number of prevailing opinions about Harambee are called into question. Now we turn to the most important issue-- the need to control Harambee activity in the interests of rational resource use.

CONTROL OF HARAMBEE

Most observers of Harambee are quick to point out that self-help activities frequently result in waste and diversion of scarce rural resources and energies from uses which would be more beneficial for rural development. A typical commentary is that of Heyer, et.al. (14, p.34): "There is an enormous amount of local funds and labour that people will readily contribute for projects.... It is important that these local contributions be directed into useful development activities." Given the analysis presented above, can we say anything about the causes of misdirected efforts and possible means of redirecting self-help activity?

Theoretically, the foremost cause of wasteful effort is simply myopic perceptions of benefits. Analyses of "market failure" have stressed divergences between individual evaluations of benefits and the true social advantages of alternative activities. Especially where preferences are distorted by social pressures, there is no reason to expect that self-help will result in a rational use of resources.

In Kenya it seems that project choice, and therefore resource utilisation, is further distorted by perceptions of government policy. From the case of the provision of the Philadelphia Hospital and from our theory, it is apparent that perceived government pledges of support, which increase the likelihood of success for a project, will encourage voluntary effort. In reality, many Kenyan Harambee activities seem to be chosen with an obvious eye toward government assistance. As Oyugi (21, p.6) has shown, "as in other parts of Kenya, several major projects have been completed in Migori that still are not operational because the communities can neither equip nor staff them. Everything was based on the unrealistic hope that eventually the government would take them over." And as Anderson (2, p.116) has argued, a major source of pressure for capital development of Harambee schools is the belief that the chance of government take-over is increased by having more brick buildings. Given the perceptions, the response is quite rational; diversion of resources is exacerbated by ambiguous, vacillating or poorly communicated government policy which allows the misleading perceptions to take on a force of their own.²⁸ In fact the Kenya government has, just recently, taken a significant step in this direction by specifying the conditions under which primary schools built through local self-help efforts will be taken over.

Assuming that this unnecessary bias could be eliminated by straightforward presentation of explicit, credible government policy, are there any positive actions which can be taken to improve the selection of projects (as opposed to simply removing the government-induced tendency to wastefulness)? The answer lies in the flexibility which characterises the relationship between leadership and community attitudes.

The theory set out above, as well as case studies of community development efforts throughout the developing world (see 4), establishes that leadership is constrained in project selection by the needs perceived by the community. As stated earlier, however, one aspect of the leadership role is the ability to introduce new attitudes, norms and ideas. The case of the Philadelphia Hospital illustrated this point. In effect the perceived needs of the community are not fixed, but elastic within limits. This point is

28. A closely related problem is that of curriculum choice. Again the inappropriate offerings are not a result of Harambee irrationality itself, but also of misdirected government policy. Here the exam system, which provides the sole validation for education, distorts the choice.

illustrated by a study (cited in 1, p. 101) of attitudes in Britain: whereas most people thought taxes were too high, they felt at the same time that expenditures were too low. Thus the range of collective consumption activities for which people will perceive real benefit exceeds the community's ability to provide finance, so that some room exists for careful manipulation of felt-needs in the direction of projects which not only satisfy the community, but also conform more closely to socially desirable uses of community resources.

Of interest in this regard is the finding, reported by Batten (4, chapter 5), that self-help projects can gain strong support from reference communications from respected individuals such as government community development officers. If as Oyugi suggests (21, p. 11), "no project can be completed in which a sub-chief does not exert his authority", then sub-chiefs and other community leaders must be influential in defining perceived needs. Therein lies hope of improving the choice of self-help activities, but this would require far more coordination than presently exists between the centre and the lowest levels of authority.²⁹

In sum, the economics and sociology of self-help regarding collective consumption goods suggests that the obvious waste generated by Harambee can conceivably be reduced through government policy-- policy to remove the bias toward waste induced by government ambivalence and policy to direct energies toward more useful activities. Any attempt to direct energy to a project with little perceivable benefit to the community will have slight chance of success at best, but the range of activities for which true benefits are generated is certainly wide enough.

A policy of this sort would, however, be only an interim improvement (and certainly not optimisation) of resource use. The history of American primary education, for example, suggests that the final resolution of the Harambee "problem" is direct government control of vital public services. Revitalisation of local community government may be the long run solution, but in the cases of American primary education and fire control in Philadelphia the self-help spirit led to a prolongation of government apathy. Especially in a developing country such as Kenya where, as the public finance literature makes clear, lack of revenue sources (tax handles) limits government activity, this danger is real.

29. It has been pointed out to me by Dr. Judith Heyer that the scope of Harambee projects which can be implemented by local efforts is further limited by the local leaders lack of technological know-how. A bridge over a swampy ravine may be quite useful, yet beyond the capabilities of the local group. Thus government technological assistance, in addition to coordination, may be necessary to direct Harambee efforts in the most fruitful directions.

One is led to ask further whether local government finance would truly represent a long-run solution. In the first place, while Harambee efforts are not likely to use resources optimally, no one suggests that optimisation is to be expected from government either. And for elected governments, voting theory quite clearly demonstrates that voting procedures, far from being optimal, can even be irrational (i.e. internally inconsistent). Secondly, local government in Kenya outside the municipalities seems to have been a failure as demonstrated by the takeover of responsibility for primary education, health and secondary roads by the central government.

Still, governmental take-over of Harambee efforts is needed in the long run, primarily in the interests of stability. Voluntary support of projects tends to be uncertain over a period of years, particularly where the number of projects is proliferating. Normalisation of finance through taxation and normalisation of administration in the hands of a legal authority can reduce the possibility of wasteful abandonment of projects. Of course the political authority can be corrupt, but obviously Harambee leaders can be corrupt as well. When Harambee leaders are not trusted, support for projects lapses; when governmental leaders are not trusted, projects can still be maintained. Furthermore, government leaders are to some extent answerable to their constituents. Project continuity is not so closely tied to personalities as it is in the case of Harambee activity.

In the near future effective local government at the village level may not be feasible due to manpower constraints. Thus central government take-over is now the norm. Yet as the scope of local services expands with development, local elections and votes on local issues would probably serve the diversity of preference between communities better than central government decisions.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper has been a rather wide-ranging and fairly abstract effort. I have tried to demonstrate interesting parallels between Harambee activity in Kenya and self-help activities in the United States. A theory of voluntary effort was set out stressing the rewards and costs of social interaction as antidote to the sterile conclusions of traditional economic theory on the provision of collective consumption goods. Finally these analyses were used to question some prevailing opinions about the nature of Harambee in Kenya and to explore possible ways of redirecting this enormous energy less wastefully.

Before closing, a final word is necessary about the very real possibility that Harambee contributions are in fact coerced by local leaders, rather than given voluntarily. As already mentioned, coercion seems to be involved to some extent in collections for the Institutes of Technology, but concern is often voiced that it has become equally characteristic of small-scale local projects. The evidence presented above, while covering very recent cases, is not sufficiently broad-based to rule out this possibility. To the extent that coercion is the basis of contributions, the analysis and the conclusions given here are inapplicable. No longer could it be argued that Harambee projects must be based on community needs; no longer could it be argued that self-help contributions are justifiable as a principle of public finance. The need for government control in this instance would be most pressing in order to eliminate the extralegal compulsion which may be applied, possibly to the detriment of general welfare.

In conclusion we should reiterate one point which has been basic to all of our analysis: that Harambee is inevitably a non-optimal use of resources. Judging it by ideal standards³⁰ will not be terribly fruitful, given the very real existence of the spirit of self-help. As a more realistic alternative, existing Harambee should be judged against feasible redirections. I agree with Brownstein's comment (10, p. 164) that the government should worry if people stop building Harambee schools. The government should accept this vitality and try to use it to benefit the rural areas where scope for improvement certainly exists.

30. Or by standards set by government activities. For example, Keller's debate points comparing Harambee schools to aided schools (15, p.30 cf.) are not as germane as Anderson's concern that increases in self-help activity drain resources from such tasks as land development and crop spraying. (2, p.117).

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